

### *Memoirs of Himself.*

witness a needless disclosure of what oppresses them with grief and shame. If they would be mortified that only a few readers should think it worth while to see them thus performing the work of self-degradation, like the fetid heroes of the Dunciad in a ditch, would it be because they are desirous that the greatest possible number should have the benefit of being averted from vice through disgust and contempt of them as its example ? No, this title of Confessions is only a nominal deference to morality, necessary indeed to be paid, because mankind never forget to insist, that the *name* of virtue shall be respected, even while vice obtains from them that practical favour on which these writers place their reliance for toleration or applause. This slight homage being duly rendered and occasionally repeated, they trust in the character of the community that they shall not meet the kind of condemnation, and they have no desire for the kind of pity, which would strictly belong to criminals : nor is it any part or effect of their penitence, to wish that society may be made better by seeing in them how odious are folly and vice. They are glad the age continues such, that even *they* may have claims to be praised; and honour of some kind, and from some quarter, is the object to which they aspire, and the consequence which they promise themselves. Let them once be convinced, that they make such exhibitions under the absolute condition of subjecting themselves irredeemably to opprobrium, as in Miletus the persons infected with a rage for destroying themselves were by a solemn decree assured of being exposed in naked ignominy after the perpetration of the deed—and these literary suicides will be heard of no more,

Rousseau has given a memorable example of this voluntary humiliation. And he has very honestly assigned the degree of contrition which accompanied the self-inflicted penance, in the declaration that this document with all its dishonours, shall be presented in his justification before the Eternal Judge.\* If we could, in any case, pardon the kind of ingenuousness which he has displayed, it would certainly

---

\* " Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the Sovereign Judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I."—ROUSSEAU, *"Confes-wmsf"* Book I.